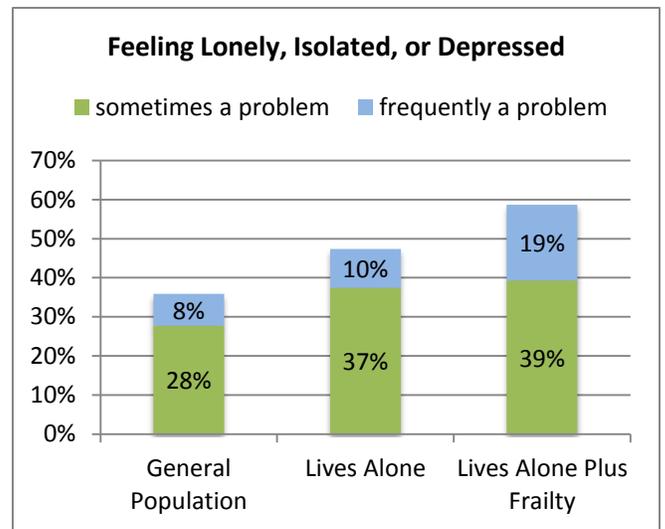
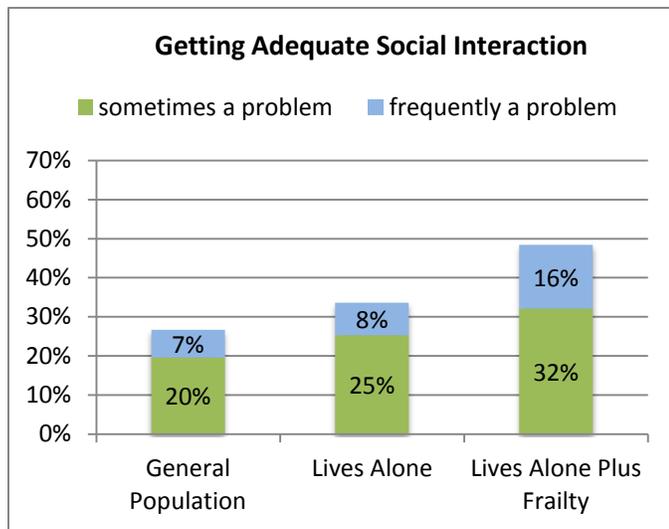


2012 Needs Assessment Issue Brief Loneliness and Social Isolation

It is not unusual for individuals of all ages to report feelings of loneliness and social isolation. In fact, researchers find that such reports are becoming more common. This is a concerning trend because loneliness and a lack of social interaction can have a negative impact on your health. Both have been associated with a greater risk of experiencing depressive symptoms, cognitive decline, and chronic disease.

Our 2011 needs assessment efforts reveal that loneliness and social isolation continue to be problematic for Erie County's older adults, and become more pronounced when combined with living alone and frailty. 27% of those who completed our needs assessment survey report sometimes or frequently having problems getting adequate social interaction. An even greater number, 36% of our respondents, report the same for feeling lonely, isolated or depressed. The likelihood of reporting problems with loneliness and inadequate social interaction increase dramatically when combined with frailty and living alone. Almost half of those with these life circumstances report difficulty getting adequate social interaction, and 58% report feeling lonely, isolated, or depressed.



The best way to combat loneliness and feelings of isolation is to remain active and engaged with others. There are a number of programs available to help.

- The Telephone Assurance Program (TAP) connects people who are homebound with others who like to talk on the phone. This way the homebound person is able to regularly keep in touch with a friendly voice to talk about their hobbies and interests—or, just the weather.
- The Retired Senior Volunteer Program links seniors to volunteer activities like mentoring a child at school, to helping out a local library. There is also a long list of free seminars one can take that hit on a variety of subjects from gardening to current events.
- Most communities in Erie County have a local senior center where one can participate in a myriad of activities including nutritious hot lunches and exercise classes. In many instances, transportation to and from the center is available to those who have retired from driving.

Erie County Senior Services—NY Connects has trained case managers available to discuss these programs over the phone. We can also assist in making arrangements for confidential depression screening. You can reach us at 716-858-8526.